

Sammy Ballard
Narrator

Eric Stott and Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers

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Henry Johnson Charter School
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Today is 4 September 2007 we are in the Henry Johnson charter school in Albany New York. We are doing an interview with Mr. Ballard and the interviewers are Wayne Clark and Eric Stott.

I: Mr. Ballard for the record could you please state your full name and your date of birth please?

SB: My full name is Sammy Leon Ballard and I was born June 13 1952.

I: Ok and where about's were you born?

SB: I was born in Elizabeth Town, North Carolina.

I: Ok did you attend school there?

SB: No we moved here moved into New York State. Newburg, New York back in 19 about 1953 and I attended High school. I was raised in Newburg. Most of the time when I was there.

I: Ok um and uh did you go to college prior to entering the service or after?

SB: I went to college prior going to into the service but I didn't get my deferment so I had to leave school and I didn't want to be as a draft so I joined the army. After my first semester in college and I joined in the army.

I: Ok why did you pick the army?

SB: Well the army at the time seemed it was a good branch and I wanted, I thought that I would enjoy it which I did. And when I joined up there to uh fight the war in Vietnam and uh unfortunately that didn't happen. I spent my tour over in Europe, Germany.

I: Ok let me um go back a little ways uh where did you go to basic training?

SB: I went to basic training at Fort Dix New Jersey.

I: Ok and once you completed your basic training where did you go for your AIT?

SB: For my AIT I went to Fort Jackson, SC.

I: And uh what was your mos or training?

SB: My mos training course I was 76 alpha which was a supply clerk.

I: Ok and from there you went to Germany?

SB: And from there I was assigned to Germany usua and New Burg Germany.

I: Ok and what were your duties there?

SB: my duties there was an uh supply clerk over there and uh that's what I did the time that I was there and the supply clerk and infantry.

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I: It was an infantry unit, did you spend a lot of time in the field training exercises?

SB: yes we did , we would go to there, that is where the trainings were there, we would spend days in the field. We would play war. The german army over there that was part of their training, getting to know the allied forces.

I: How did you like Germany?

SB: Germany was real nice, I enjoyed the time I was there, it was a lot of free time even though on weekends you had been very comfortable. The government there had contracts with the American government. When there training, you had a chance to tour Europe and they had buses come on the base with signs on them, whatever the sign said, you could do

I: how long were you in Germany for?

SB: 2 years, I opted for. you had a choice, you could get the European out and stay there up to a year or take the cruise back or you can fly back...I chose to fly back because when I thought about it I was too much being out on the water too long for me.

I: uh uh, what rank were you at that point?

SB: At that time I was infantry

I: and uh, once you got back to the states did you stay in the army or were you discharged?

SB: I was discharged with honorable discharge from the service . Then I got out then I landed a job at one of the VA hospitals. I just felt uncomfortable as to what I wanted to do. So 3 months later I found myself in the Marines.

I: What made you decide on the Marine Corps?

SB: it may seem Kind of strange, but I was looking for action at that time, I asked army to send me to Vietnam and they didn't. They could arrange for it and uh I got out of the army, signed up for the Marines and that is what happened.

I: Ok, now, you went through army basic training, army AIT, now you are in the Marine Corps. so I am assuming you had to go through Marine Corps training

SB: I had to do everything all over again, because what the army taught you didn't count. and , the Marine Corps was very different, I had to do the 2 weeks of boot camp, our unit was the last one to do 13 weeks and if I must say so it was quite an experience because branches, different service, they have, they feel their service is the best service then all of them.

I: How did they treat you when they found out you had been in the Army?

SB: Well to them I was known as an ex-doggie because that time they want to become a Marine, the army wasn't good enough. For me it was, I won't say bad, Just the way they tried to break your spirit down because they was, When everyone was running 3 miles, I was running 6. I was running 3 for the army 3 for the Marine Corps. everything I did I had to do double. That's how I was treated, not army myself. Every prior service was treated the same way. We did double everything. I understood it and I dealt with it. One gentleman got sent back and I just put it in my mind not to be sent because I was so I did my 13 weeks straight up, then all was said and done it, I laugh at it, it was a good learning experience.

I: OK, once you completed your basic, did you go on to advanced training?

SB: I went to, I was assigned to cherry point, North Carolina. and when I got there, I was in, my assigned first unit, I had an attitude because my gunnery sergeant, senior nco said "you prior service guy?" yeah, I am an Ex doggie, and he said lose the attitude. and uh, I said ok, you're are a Marine, ,he apologized to me and I had to go through in basic training, in boot camp. to hear someone say that, I was ok. I guess you can't be that bad. it turned out to be the 4 years I was there quite well.

I: What did you do there?

SB; I was still in supply and the air wing and my gunny and my co they were buddies of Vietnam, for some reason they took a liking upon me and took me under their wings. They got me a job at the officers club and I learned how to bartend while I was there. And then I winded up what is being called a strakler ang because I had to prove, felt that I had to prove myself because the 4 years that I was in the military, the Marines, I got a mass every year. I earned that. I am going to do my time here, I might as well learn everything I can about the Marine Corps. and that is what I did. that is something they don't give away, you have to earn that. the regulations, spit polish every day because I was going make my stay there because I was gonna make my stay there as comfortable as possible for me. I thought the only way to do that was stand out. and that is what I did.

I: ok, so uh, the rest of your time in the Marine Corps was spent right there?

SB: I had put in for Vietnam and uh my gunny and col. they flagged all my orders, man you don't want to go there, stay here. in which I did. and the 4 years that I was in the Marine Corps I never went overseas. my duty was state side, right there, Cherry Point. I liked it, I got used to it and came to the realization that I wasn't going to war, not that I didn't want to go I accepted it. then like I said the times I was there, I made the best of it. after they retired what I felt in boot camp, I was beginning to feel again because the other staff, nco's, and few other officers knew I was being toted. when a gunny and col retired I felt it was time for me to go because I was getting ready to catch, I was getting ready to catch what I did in boot camp. I didn't want to do that, I wasn't going to go through that again.

I: once you were discharged from the Marine Corps. what did you do?

SB: well. I was discharged from the Marine Corps. I got out and got a job working as quality control at IBM. and I went back to school at mo. saint Mary college, which is down state.

I: was that through the GI bill?

SB: yes.

I: ok

SB: So I was going to school for a time and I was working for a time and I figured I was always ahead of time because I graduated high school a year ahead of time through a special program that they had. And

uh, so I went to school first, got into college, then I got a job at, first I started out part-time at IBM then I got hired at IBM. and uh, I figure well you know, I finished up school early which it didn't go like that because once again I put myself under a lot of stress . once again 15 to 18 that didn't happen and I went to school straight through full time for 3 years. I went there with 17 credits and you need 130 to graduate high school and that is what I am working on now.

I: so you are still going to school?

SB: yes, I am trying to finish up what I left off on back then.

I: ok who are you employed with today?

SB: I am disabled vet, I get a VA pension

I; I have you stayed in contact with people you were in the service with? di you maintain contact with gunny and col. since they retired?

SB: no, I sure didn't. I was thinking about those guys the other day,

I: ok, alright. how do you think being in the service changed or effected your life?

SB: it taught me discipline. that is one thing that the Marine Corps will teach you is discipline. it makes you more responsible for what you are doing. give s you an outlook on thinks that you

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